SRI JAHNAVA DEVI AND SRI NITYANANDA PRABHU

excerpts from

THE BIOGRAPHY OF SRI JAHNAVA DEVI AND SRI NITYANANDA PRABHU

FROM
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(excerpt from Srila Prabhupada Conversation with Three Professors:)
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Professor: "Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a *guru* in the line of disciplic succession?"

Prabhupada: "Yes. Jahnava Devi was. Nityananda's wife. She became. If, if she's able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible, to become *guru?* But, ah, not so many. Actually, one who has attained the perfection, she can become *guru.* Man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection -- *ye krsna-tattva veda, sei guru haya.* The qualification of *guru* is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Krishna, then, he or she can become *guru. Ye krsna-tattva veda, sei guru haya."* [break in tape] "...In our material world, eh, is there any prohibition that woman cannot become professor? If she's qualified, she can become professor. What is wrong with it? She must be qualified -- that is the condition. Similarly, if the woman understands Krishna consciousness perfectly, she can become *guru...*"

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SRIMATI JAHNAVA DEVI

Known amongst the Gaudiya Vaisnavas as Ma Jahnava (or Jahnava Ma), and also as Isvari, this great *acharya* of the *Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya-Sampradaya* was famous for her unalloyed devotion to her husband, Sri Nityananda Prabhu. Born as the daughter of Sarakhel Surya Das Pandit of Sali-gram, along with her younger sister Vasudha, Sri Jahnava later became a prominent *guru* after the disappearance of Sri Nityananda, initiating both men and women alike.

Nityananda Prabhu is the incarnation of Lord Balarama, and is the plenary expansion and intimate associate of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is none other than Sri Krishna Himself. It is stated by Srila Kavi Karnapura in the *Gaura-ganoddesa-dipika* (65) that Vasudha and Jahnava are incarnations of Varuni and Revati, the two wives of Lord Balarama, and that their father Surya Das is an incarnation of Revati's father Kakudmi; but in the next verse (66), Sri Karnapura mentions that some devotees consider Vasudha to be Ananga Manjari, who is Sri Radha's little sister, and that others consider Jahnava to be Ananga Manjari. However, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur concludes many of his songs found in *Kalyana-kalpa-taru* with prayers directed to Sri Jahnava as an incarnation of Sri Ananga Manjari.

When Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu accepted the renounced order of *sannyasa,* Sri Nityananda accompanied him on his trip to Jagannath Puri. Then after sporting many pastimes there, Mahaprabhu ordered Nityananda to return to Bengal. He spoke with Nityananda in a solitary place, and it is said that at that time he also told him to get married. Thus Nityananda returned to Bengal and had many pastimes as he traveled around like a wandering madman. During this period, he visited the town of Panihati and presided over the chipped rice and yoghurt festival of Raghunath Das, which is described in the *Chaitanya-Charitamrita.* Finally visiting the devotees in Navadvipa, they ascertained (by his desire) that he wanted to get married. Therefore they endeavored to match him with the two daughters of Sarakhel Surya Das Pandita, from the nearby village of Sali-gram *(Bhakti-Ratnakar* 12.3870 - 3879).

Thus Sri Jahnava and her younger sister Sri Vasudha were wedded to Sri Nityananda Prabhu in great pomp and celebration. The entire Vaisnava community participated, and everyone was overcome with ecstasy because the two wives, besides being gorgeous beyond compare, were extremely pious and were known as great Vaisnavas. Later Vasudha gave birth to two children -- a boy named Vira-bhadra (or Vira-chandra), and a girl named Ganga Devi. Kavi Karnapura states *(G.g.d.* 67, 69) that Vira-chandra is an incarnation of Ksirodaka-sayi Visnu (an expansion of Sankarsana), and Ganga Devi is none other than the river Ganga herself.

The young Vasudha soon passed away, however, and Jahnava thus resolved to raise her sister's children. In addition, she adopted a boy named Rama-chandra. In this way, Ma Jahnava spent much of her youth taking care of the three children, making sure they became

great devotees. Vira-bhadra, especially, grew up to be a prominent leader in the Vaisnava community, and when he accepted Jahnava Devi (his stepmother) as his *guru*, taking initiation and *mantra* from her, many other Vaisnavas did so as well.

Much of Jahnava's fame began as a result of her transcendental relationship with Lord Nityananda Prabhu. But her activities soon revealed her greatness, and she was recognized and respected as a superlative Vaisnava on her own merit. She traveled with large entourages on pilgrimage all around Bengal, and also twice to Sri Vrindavan. While in Vrindavan, she established lasting bonds with the famous Goswamis living there, such as Sri Gopal Bhatta, Sri Jiva, Sri Raghunath Das, Sri Lokanath and Sri Bhugarbha. And she cultivated her widely acclaimed devotion to the deity Sri Gopinath; after her return to Bengal she had a deity of Sri Radhika fashioned and sent to live by the side of Sri Gopinath in Vrindavan. Indeed, her devotion to this deity was so intense that it endeared her to the pious and impious alike. By her example she showed how to perform deity worship and devote one's life to spiritual service.

From time to time there was the observance of huge Vaisnava festivals, such as the one sponsored by Sri Narottam Das Thakur on the occasion of the first *Gaura-purnima* celebration (appearance day of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu). Sri Jahnava Isvari was given a grand reception by Narottama and his associates, and she was honored as the senior Vaisnava (Vaisnavi) of the event. After the ecstatic *kirtan* led by Narottam, Jahnava odrered everyone to sport the *Holi-lila* by throwing brightly colored powders on each other. Of course, she was given the first pot of powder and personally put some on the body of the Lord's deity as an offering. Later, after the all-night *kirtan* and bathing ceremony of Sri Mahaprabhu, Jahnava cooked and organized the morning offering. Then she fed the assembled devotees with her own hand.

After this great festival, Sri Isvari then bade farewell and proceeded with her entourage on a pilgrimage to Vraja. There she happily met with all the Goswamis of Vrindavan, and she was very pleased to listen as Sri Jiva recited many of the newly written scriptures. Circumambulating the 12 forests along with many devotees, she served the principle deities in Vrindavan and then returned to Bengal. Being based in Kharadoha, she frequently traveled around Bengal to visit the many devotees living in various holy places.

Thus Ma Jahnava Isvari lived a very long and productive life, delivering many sinful souls with her gift of ecstatic *prema-bhakti*, initiating men and women alike into the divine grace of pure devotional service, presiding over great festivals, preaching the glories of chanting the holy names of the Lord, and otherwise spreading the joy of the spiritual world wherever she went. It is said that she passed away in Kamya-vana in Vraja, though no known *samadhi* tomb exists there as a memorial.

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* EXCERPTS FROM THE BIOGRAPHY *

[Many years after the disappearance of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and several years after Sri Nityananda's disappearance, Sri Jahnava Ma and her associates are invited by Srila Narottam Das Thakur to attend the first Gaura Purnima festival at Khetari. She travels there from her home in Kharadoha and is received grandly. After presiding over the huge celebrations, and witnessing the ecstatic kirtana of Narottam, she orders everyone to enjoy the sport of throwing brightly colored powders on each other (she first offers some onto the body of the deity). The next morning she cooks and offers bhoga to the Lord, then feeds maha-prasad to all the devotees with her own hand. Later she prepares to leave with her associates for a pilgrimage to Vrindavan, and all the devotees of Gauda-desh are very sad to see her leave.]

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ON THE PATH TO VRINDAVAN, JAHNAVA DEVI DELIVERS MANY SINFUL ATHEISTS

(28) Sri Jahnava Isvari was very anxious about the trip to Sri Vrindavan; she maintained her composure externally, but internally she was quite agitated. While describing the activities of Isvari during her trip to Vrindavan, I could not elaborate on all of the events that transpired. But I will speak whatever little I have heard from the mouths of the *sadhus* -- they have confirmed that this earth has become glorious due to the gift of *bhakti* personally bestowed by Isvari herself.

One day the traveling party entered into a large town, and by the wish of Isvari they halted to rest. Spending the day there they observed the practices of the people and became most anxious for their welfare. These people were greatly sinful atheists and very unruly, and they engaged in extremely disturbing mockery of the visiting Vaisnavas. At dusk that evening, the great *maha-bhagavat* devotees came and offered obeisances at Sri Isvari's feet. Seeing this, the sinful rogues of the town laughed and jeered, saying, "I suppose this is the wife of a *vipra!"* Another said, "These people don't have any sense at all -- they bow down to human beings while neglecting to bow to the *devas!"* Another said, "The mercy of Goddess Chandi will be upon them." Another said, "What do such ignorant persons know about the mercy of Chandi? Doesn't the wife of the *vipra* as well as the *vipra* bow to Her? This whole group of visitors are certainly offenders unto Chandi!"

Ridiculing the Vaisnavas in this way while laughing and laughing out loud, the rascals went to their temple of Goddess Chandi and were violently waving their arms about. Bowing before Chandi's image, they exclaimed again and again, "This very night all those strangers will die! But if they offer their bodies, minds and words in worship of your feet, then protect them and give them your shelter."

Having said this, the sinful rogues then returned to their homes and went to sleep. But the Goddess Chandi herself became very angry upon hearing the words uttered by her sinful devotees. Her upper and lower lips trembled while her eyes became fiercely reddened.

She appeared to the rascals in a vision as they slept, and showing them an extremely sharp sword in her hand she roared to them, "Oh you most sinful among wicked men! There is no preventing your suffering, for today I will cut off all your heads! You are so madly intoxicated with your own false egos that you have dared to ridicule the most worshipable devotees of the Supreme Lord! Oh most wicked degenerates! You do not have any idea of the truth about the one you have contemptuously called the wife of a *vipra* -- I hold her lotus feet on my own head, and she is worshipable for everyone. She is the chaste wife of Nityananda-Balarama-chandra. Her supremely sweet name is *'Jahnava Isvari'*, and by chanting her name all fear of material miseries is cast afar. She is the personification of the most dearly beloved compassion of Prabhu Nityananda, and by virtue of her own glorious qualities she is freely distributing ecstatic *prema-bhakti* unto all souls. Who doesn't perpetually worship her two lotus feet? Everyone sings of her auspicious fame, for she mitigates the threefold material miseries. This is stated in an ancient verse,

nityananda-priyam prema-
bhakti-ratna-pradayinim
sri jahnavesvarim vande
tapa-traya-nivarinim

'I offer my respectful obeisances unto Sri Jahnava Isvari, the most beloved of Sri Nityananda Prabhu. She bestows the priceless jewel of ecstatic loving devotional service, and she wards off the threefold material miseries.'

"If she is merciful to sinful scoundrels like all of you, then only will you be benefitted; and if she is not, then you will surely meet your downfall. You will be protected if you take shelter of her, but if you don't then no one will escape punishment by my hand!"

Saying this, Goddess Chandi vanished from the dream of the fallen townspeople, and they immediately woke up and began to tremble incessantly in great fear. In the morning they went to see the great *mahantas* who were visiting and, pitifully condemning themselves in great distress, fell at the feet of the devotees and rolled about on the ground. Soaking themselves with their own tears of sorrow, they exclaimed again and again, "We have committed grave offenses! Please protect us all! You have certainly come our way just to deliver sinful rogues such as we -- please free us from our fallen predicament, for we have now taken full shelter of you! All of you are pleased when Isvari is pleased, and you take the essence of devotion as it is given to you by her feet. Do any of us have the power to understand the truth about her? Whatever we now speak is only by her causeless mercy, otherwise how could persons like us possibly know something of her glory? Therefore we have certainly offered our souls unto her lotus feet. Everyone knows us to be greatly sinful demonic atheists, and Jahnava's fame will spread far and wide since she has delivered such fallen ones."

Exclaiming thus, they offered obeisances on the ground again and again; seeing this, the assembled *prabhus* showed mercy to all of them. Isvari especially displayed extremely compassionate forgiveness to the previously sinful rogues, and she thereby made all their ditressed hearts bloom in great happiness.

Staying in that town for two or four days, the pilgrimage then moved on after fulfilling the desires of the fallen townspeople. All the people became submerged in the mellows of *bhakti-rasa*, and their lives were so permeated with a staunch devotional attitude that they also spread this mood to everyone else they met.

SHE DELIVERS SOME FIERCE MUSLIM DACOITS

(67) Thus traveling across the countryside, the party halted one day before a village on the bank of a river and made their camp in a divinely beautiful spot. In that village were some extremely fierce Muslim dacoits, and they sat in a secluded place while addressing their followers, "These visiting Bengalis have many jewels, and we will go and steal them. Make your preparations very carefully." After first sending a spy to observe the situation, they hastily dressed and took up many different kinds of hand-weapons. When the spy returned, he informed them, "After performing nama-sankirtana, the Bengalis have all gone to sleep. If we wait until the second prahar of the night, we can go there and accomplish our purpose -- this is the way I see it."

Hearing this report, the dacoit leader in his very fearful-looking clothes departed along with his own men, feeling great happiness in his mind. They proceeded very quickly, but somehow the short path seemed to go on endlessly. Absorbed in their degraded consciousness, they could not understand that anything was wrong, and after thus walking and walking on the path throughout the night, morning finally arrived.

Seeing that the break of dawn was taking place, the dacoits became very fearful, and the leader of the thieves told his men, "Just see what improbable thing has happened -- we have somehow arrived at the point from which we started! We had gone toward the place where we had seen the Gaudiyas camped, but now we have wasted the entire night in this gross mistake! And a fear has been gradually increasing in my mind -- I sense that all our lives will be ruined if we anger the Gaudiya Gosanis. Therefore please listen to what I say -- from today onward, all of us will give up the activities of thieves. We have

committed so many sins that there is no end to our iniquity. Indeed, there will be no deliverance from the punishment of Yama, the god of death. Come on, come on -- let us go to the Gaudiyas' camp. They will certainly show us their merciful grace."

Saying this, the leader of the dacoits abandoned his thieves' dress and weapons, and miserably proceeded to the place where Jahnava Isvari was situated. By beholding the vision of the great *mahantas* present there, all of the thieves' minds became supremely pure. Falling on the ground they began to cry pitifully, and in extreme distress they wailed and prayed to the devotees, offering their very souls in surrender. They said, "In this part of the country we are known as extremely sinful dacoits! Please be merciful unto us, and your fame will be spread throughout the whole world!"

After saying this, they fell silent and were unable to say anything more. Tears flowed profusely from their eyes, and they were most disturbed in their hearts. Seeing their condition, great compassion arose in Sri Isvari's mind, and along with her devotees she showed kindness and forgiveness to the thieves. News of the deliverance of the dacoits spread quickly throughout the countryside. It is not possible to describe the scene that took place when Isvari and her party departed from that area.

SRI ISVARI ARRIVES IN MATHURA

(90) After some days the group arrived in Mathura. Seeing this, the people of Mathura Puri became unlimitedly happy. Offering respect unto the Mathura *brahmanas*, the travelers bathed in the Yamuna at Vishram-ghat. Hearing the sudden news of Isvari's arrival, the great devotees of the town came very quickly to see her. Upon beholding the vision of Sri Jahnava, they became soaked with streams of tears pouring from their eyes; and at the sight of the great *mahantas* accompanying her, they became totally overwhelmed in their hearts. The loving reciprocations that were shared by the local devotees and the visitors filled the eyes of the most fortunate spectators. The Mathura *brahmanas* were exceedingly jubilant, and they sent word to Vrindavan of the travelers' plan to proceed there. Then, they took the visitors from that place and situated them at an uncommonly beautiful residence. Thus Isvari and the devotees stayed in Mathura that day.

SRI ISVARI TRAVELS ON TO VRINDAVAN IN THE COMPANY OF MANY VAISNAVAS

(97) The next morning, after having *darshan* of the deity of Lord Varaha, and visiting Sri Keshava Deva at the birthplace of Lord Krishna, the traveling party left for Vrindavan. All the Vaisnavas of Mathura also went along, and whoever witnessed the splendor of this procession felt the awakening of ecstatic bliss. All the Goswamis of Vrindavan came very quickly from Vrindavan to meet the travelers, and they walked in the greatest bliss, leading single-file lines of their devotees along the narrow paths. Coming to the holy place of Akrura-ghat on the border of the town, all the Vrindavan devotees saw Isvari approaching a very short distance away.

And when Parameśvari Das in Isvari's group saw the Vrindavan Goswamis approaching in the distance, he began to speak to Isvari, "Please listen to me speak the names of the great devotees who are coming."

Receiving the order of Isvari, Sri Parameśvari Das began to inform her of their identities by pointing with his finger and saying in a soft, sweet voice, "Here is Sri Gopal Bhatta, who is verily made of Gauraprema. Here is Sri Bhugarbha and Sri Lokanath, the abode of good qualities. Here is Krishnadas Brahmachari, Sri Krishna Pandit, Sri Madhu Pandit, and the famous Sri Jiva."

Hearing this narration of the names and activities of the devotees increased the supreme bliss of Sri Isvari. All the Goswamis arrived before Isvari and in the topmost ecstasy offered obeisances on the ground. But Jahnava Isvari, although being the personification of *prema-bhakti*, considered herself to be insignificant. Who could possibly understand her ways? Beholding the ecstatic loving dealings of the Goswamis, her mind became very restless and agitated. All the Goswamis very fearfully apprehended this uncommon behavior of the personification of devotion Sri Bhakti-Devi herself.

Krishnadas Sarakhel, Madhava Acharya, Sri Paramesvari Das and the rest of those with Jahnava's party very enthusiastically met with all the Vrindavan Goswamis. How could a fallen rascal like myself describe this ecstatic meeting of such great souls? And who could retain their composure upon hearing all the statements shared by these great souls overwhelmed in divine ecstatic love as they met?

All the disciples of Sri Paramesvari Das were very happy to be introduced by their guru to all the Goswamis. In great affection Paramesvari brought his disciple Govinda forward and said, "This devotee's name is Govinda. He is the receptacle of *bhakti-rasa*, and is the very life of all the Vaisnavas. He is the son of Chiranjiva Sena, the resident of Khanda, and the beloved younger brother of Rama-chandra." Hearing this, Sri Gopal Bhatta and the others were overjoyed and embraced the boy, showing great loving affection. The gracious tenderness they exhibited upon being introduced to Bhagavan Kaviraj and the others couldn't even be spoken of.

Then everyone proceeded to Akrura-ghat and had *darshan* of the beautiful deity of Sri Gopinath there. Coming before Sri Isvari, Sri Jiva informed her, "Being fearful of the crowds of people in Vrindavan, Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu would not stay there during his visit to Vraja. Instead, he would go to Vrindavan and beg alms, thereafter returning here to this place of Akrura, which is very isolated."

Hearing this story, Sri Isvari became soaked with tears falling from her eyes, and exhaling a deep sigh, she offered her obeisances on the spot. As she bowed down, all the great souls present became restless, and they remembered the extraordinary pastimes of the Lord.

Keeping Isvari before them, everyone then left, and in the greatest ecstatic bliss they entered Vrindavan. Seeing the beautiful splendor of Vrindavan, Isvari's condition was such that I am incapable of describing it. They decided to go first to the residence of Sri Jiva at Radha-Damodar's temple, and Jahnava Isvari proceeded there with her entourage. The manner in which they all became completely pervaded with boundless joy while situated at that place could not be portrayed with mere words.

And who could understand the activities of the Vaisnavas who were engaged in the service of the deities Sri Govinda, Gopinath and Madan-Mohan in Vrindavan? After finishing their *seva* to the divine deities, these devotees came to the residence for the *darshan* of Isvari. What ecstatic loving bliss arose in their minds when they met with Krishnadas Sarakhel and the others! What a wonderful scene as hundreds and hundreds of women and men Vraja-vasis came for *darshan!* Who could say anything of the passionate yearning of these excited people?

After some time, all the Goswamis headed by Sri Gopal Bhatta bade farewell and departed for their own residences, leaving Sri Jiva Goswami in charge of the visiting party. Sri Jiva remained very close to Isvari, for he was supremely wise in regard to all decisions.

Later, Sri Gopal Bhatta, Sri Lokanath and others returned to the place where Sri Isvari was staying. Seeing them arrive, Isvari very happily proclaimed in a sweet voice, "Now I will go for *darshan*." Hearing these words from Isvari caused great jubilation in the minds of the assembled devotees, and they all accompanied her for *darshan* of the local temples. They went to see Sri Govinda, Sri Gopinath, Sri Madan-Mohan, Sri Radha-Vinoda, Sri Radha-Raman, and Sri Radha-Damodar. Who could describe the overwhelming absorption in divine ecstatic *prema* they felt upon visiting all these deities? They brought various types of cloth and ornaments with them, and made offerings of such wherever they went. No one has the ability to describe the devotional attitudes they expressed, considering themselves to be lowly and insignificant.

THE DEVOTEE SRI GOVINDA OBTAINS THE TITLE 'KAVIRAJ' FROM THE VRINDAVAN GOSWAMIS

(141) Sri Isvari and her entourage returned to their residence, and she sat in a solitary place while directing the allotment of accomodations for the devotees. Madhava Acharya and the others informed the residents of Vrindavan of the great festival that was held at Sri Khetarigram; hearing this story transported Sri Lokanath and all the other Goswamis into such ecstatic *premananda* that they became

drowned in tears of pure love. There were many more talks they shared amongst each other, but I will not elaborate due to fear of this book becoming too large.

Sri Paramesvari Das requested Govinda to recite some of his nectarean writings, and everyone was overjoyed to listen to Govinda's extremely enchanting songs. They all agreed that the title "Kaviraj" was quite befitting for him, and thus they proclaimed him "Sri Govinda Kaviraj." Sri Isvari became very elated in her mind to witness this occasion.

What can I say about the blissful events taking place in Vrindavan? The news of Isvari's arrival spread far and wide, and the most wise persons became deeply absorbed in the topmost delight.

SRI JAHNAVA DEVI GOES TO SRI RADHA-KUNDA AND MEETS WITH SRI RAGUNATH DAS GOSWAMI

(150) Sri Raghunath Das Goswami was a resident of Sri Radhika-kunda. He became very enlivened to hear of Isvari's arrival in Vrindavan, but he was unable to travel there to see her. Feeling separation from Sri Rupa Goswami, his heart was in a state of constant agitation, and from neglecting to eat grains and other proper foodstuffs, his body had become extremely emaciated. Whose heart would not break upon observing whatever personal vows he kept and whatever activities that occupied him internally? He would regularly go to see Sri Krishnadas Kaviraj and many other great devotees to bow down and offer his soul. Sometimes he would go from Radha-Kunda at Govardhan to visit Nandisvar (Nanda-gram) in the company of Gopal, Raghava Pandit and others.

When everyone assembled in Vrindavan for Isvari's darshan, they informed her of Sri Das Goswami's condition. Who has the *shakti* to speak of the internal moods that occurred when Sri Jahnava Isvari heard about him? She then informed Sri Gopal Bhatta and all the other Goswamis, "In the morning I shall go to Sri Kunda." The devotees in the assembly said to each other, "Let us quickly make arrangements to arrive for *darshan* in Sri Kunda and other holy places! There must be very nice facilities provided for completely relieving our fatigue, and then we may proceed on tour of the sacred forests."

With this in mind, Sri Isvari very happily departed for Sri Radha-Kunda, surrounded by the most learned devotees. Traveling toward Sri Kunda, they passed through Bahula-vana, and their hearts were overwhelmed with *prema* when they beheld the beauty and splendor of Sri Radha-Kunda. Knowing that this was the residence of Sri Raghunath Das Goswami, they proceeded there to see him.

Sri Das Goswami was sitting in a solitary place on the bank of the Kunda, chanting the holy names very slowly and deliberately. Sri Krishnadas Kaviraj arrived on the spot and stood waiting before Das Goswami. As soon as there was an opportunity to speak, he said, "Sri Jahnava Isvari has arrived." Hearing this announcement made Das Goswami's heart become pervaded with an astonishing level of ecstatic love, and he immediately got up and walked ahead of Krishnadas on the footpath to Jahnava, with both his eyes filled with tears.

Sri Isvari saw Das Goswami approaching, and noticed that his body was extremely thin, and his effulgence was as brilliant as the sun. Who could possibly understand the inner thoughts of Sri Isvari? Tears cascaded from both her eyes, and she could not prevent them from doing so. Sri Das Goswami offered his obeisances and somehow maintained his composure, and Sri Isvari (the personification of *prema*) reciprocated with him befittingly. Whose heart would not split upon hearing those things uttered by Das Goswami before Sri Isvari?

The most astounding divine love awakened in Das Goswami's mind as he met with Madhava Acharya and the other devotees. What incredible tears gushed from the eyes of everyone present! For a short while they just stood there completely entranced! All the Vraja-vasi residents of Arita-Gram (the village around Radha-Kunda) came out in great ecstasy to have the *darshan* of Sri Isvari. The party stayed at Sri Radha-Kunda for three or four days, and they very carefully engaged in cooking there. With cheerful hearts they offered *bhoga* to Krishna and then fed the Vraja-vasi Vaisnavas. Who would not feel fulfilled upon witnessing the ecstatic blissful love that arose as everyone took *prasad?* Who can understand the extraordinary manners of Sri Jahnava Isvari? The intelligence of a most fallen rascal like me surely cannot.

SRI ISVARI HAS AN AMAZING VISION AT SRI RADHA-KUNDA

(178) Once at midday, by the bank of the Kunda, Jahnava heard the sound of a flute, and she lost all her composure. She beheld a mischievous prank that could not be seen by the others; some learned person in the future will elaborate on all these enchanting topics.

Still I will say a little about this -- Isvari was overjoyed to hear a flute playing, and she looked around on all sides to see where it was coming from. At the base of a *kadamba* tree she saw Lord Shyama glowing beautifully, standing in a threefold posture and conquering millions of Cupids with his charms. Smiling ever so pleasantly he played sweetly upon his flute. Who could keep their composure upon hearing that music which maddens the entire universe? Sri Radhika along with Lalita and her other girlfriends surrounded Sri Shyama-sundar in the greatest playful mood. Viewing this amazingly beautiful scene caused Jahnava Isvari to fall unconscious in the most indescribable way. After some time she regained consciousness and became still. All this fun was experienced in a solitary place, and she revealed it to no one.

AFTER DARSHAN OF SRI GOVARDHAN AND OTHER HOLY PLACES, SRI ISVARI RETURNS TO VRINDAVAN AND SERVES THE DEITIES THERE

(186) When Sri Jahnava desired to proceed for *darshan* of Govardhan and other holy places in the area, she expressed to Srila Das Goswami that she wanted him to lead the way. Das Goswami fell to the ground and offered his obeisances in response. Becoming deeply absorbed in humility he gave his consent. Whose heart would not break upon hearing his words of humble submission to the wishes of Ma Jahnava? And what could I possibly say about the inner moods of Isvari?

Thus Jahnava Iswari, surrounded by her maidservants and other devotees, very slowly proceeded from Radha-Kunda toward Govardhan Hill. There is absolutely nothing to which I can compare the overwhelming rapture in ecstatic love that the party felt while visiting Govardhan, Manasi-Ganga and the other holy places thereabout. Madhava Acharya and his associates became very agitated in divine love, but Sri Jiva Goswami and his associates calmed them. Thus they all continued on to tour Nanda-gram and many other areas; even a tiny drop of their passionate entrancement in *prema* could not be described with only one mouth.

After a few days, the entourage of Sri Isvari surrounded by many great devotees *(sri bhagavatas)* returned to Vrindavan. In the greatest bliss they again visited the three temples of Sri Govinda, Gopinath and Madan-Mohan. Then after taking *darshan* of Sri Radha-Vinoda and Sri Radha-Raman, they returned to their camp with jubilant minds. While staying at that residence, Sri Isvari would sometimes cook grains and vegetable preparations very attentively and offer them to Sri Govinda-Deva. At other times she would cook various kinds of rice and vegetables and feed them to Sri Gopinath in the greatest bliss. And sometimes she would very quickly cook in numerous ways and offer the foodstuffs to Sri Madan-Mohan with so many different arrangements. Similarly, she personally fed Sri Radha-Damodar, Sri Radha-Raman, and Sri Radha-Vinoda. She also served all the Vaisnavas the *sri-prasad* with her own hand -- who could describe the blissful exhilaration that was felt by everyone at such times?

STORIES OF SRI ISVARI'S TOUR OF THE SACRED FORESTS OF VRAJA

(201) Isvari's mind became anxious to listen to the recitation of the Goswamis' books, so Sri Jiva Goswami recited some for her to hear. While listening to his narrations of books like Sanatan Goswami's *Brihad-Bhagavatamrita* and others, she had no control of her overwhelming amazement in ecstatic love. Whose soul would not be pleased to behold the careful attention with which Sri Jahnava and Jiva Goswami performed the various aspects of the supremely rare path of *bhakti?*

After a few days, Jahnava left Vrindavana with the assembly to tour the forests of Vraja. Only the most fortunate souls saw the manifestations of pure divine love that occurred while this party toured the twelve forests named Madhu, Tala, Kumuda, Bahula, Kamya, Khadira, Bhadra, Bhandira, Sri, Lauha, Mahavan and Vrindavan.

In great jubilation, I can say a little about this tour. Isvari and the group traveled until they again came to Govardhan Hill, and camped nearby. Sri Jahnava Isvari went to sit in a solitary place close by the mountain, and she began to think and meditate in her mind, "In the Springtime, the two brothers Krishna and Balarama come here to sport in the greatest fun along with their respective beloved *gopi*-friends." Thinking like this, Isvari was unable to keep still, and she repeatedly looked upon the place of the Spring festival. Suddenly she beheld the sportive pastimes of the two brothers sharing the Spring festival *rasa*-dance with their respective beloveds. Rohininandana (Balarama) was seen throwing brightly colored powders in different ways along with his dear *gopi*-friends, and many other exciting sports unfolded.

And Yashoda-nandana (Krishna), the abode of *rasa*, also sported many festive enjoyments along with his own beloved cowherd girlfriends. Who is able to speak of these pastimes headed by the powder-throwing sport? There is absolutely no comparison to this astonishing splendor.

Seeing this amazing *lila*, which enchants the entire universe, Jahnava fainted and fell upon the ground. After some time she regained consciousness, but didn't reveal to anyone what she had experienced. Feeling great happiness, she then left that spot.

It's impossible to speak of the bliss that Isvari felt while visiting Rama-Ghat (the place by the bank of the Yamuna where Balarama performed his rasa-dance). In a similar way to her previous vision, she also saw the Lord of her life (her own departed husband Nityananda Prabhu). Absorbed in ecstatic love, she completely forgot herself while sitting in a solitary place and meditating on Sri Balarama's *rasa-lila* dance. Her limbs went slack, and she exhaled a deep breath. Suddenly, she saw a vision of the *rasa*-pastimes -- there was the supremely distinguished Balarama, exuberantly sporting with his own beloved *gopi*-friends in dancing, singing, and other dalliances. Beholding this transcendental splendor, Jahnava experienced such bliss that she fainted on the spot. Later regaining consciousness, she looked this way and that. No one else knew about what she was feeling within, and she departed from Rama-Ghat along with the rest of the entourage.

Entering a village by the bank of the Yamuna, she saw that the people there were very unhappy, and she therefore showed them mercy. Living in that village was a very gentle *brahmana*, who was very old and had a wonderful son. But the boy died while very young, causing the poor *vipra* to roll on the ground and cry pitifully. Taking the dead boy in his lap, he wailed along with his wife; the sound of their crying together was enough to melt wood or stone.

Seeing their crying, Sri Jahnava Isvari's heart softened with tender compassion, and she therefore became very anxious to help them. She tried to touch the body, but the mother said, "Please don't defile yourself by touching my dead boy!" Isvari replied, "You are a Vraja-vasi -- I will become purified by touching your son." Saying this, she put her hand on the boy's head, and he immediately regained consciousness and started looking all around. He got down and offered obeisances to the lotus feet of Sri Jahnava, and she lifted the boy up. Everyone present became most overjoyed to witness this miracle, and the *brahmana* with his wife fell to the ground at Jahnava's feet and said, "You have rejuvenated our dead son by your glance of mercy!" But Isvari replied, "Seeing your lamentation, Krishna has brought your son to life -- none of this is my doing."

In this way, exhibiting her mercy in so many ways from place to place, Sri Jahnava traveled with her entourage throughout the forests of Vraja until they gradually returned to Vrindavan.

SRI SRI RADHA-GOPINATH'S INSTRUCTION TO SRI ISVARI

(235) Jahnava remembered the order she had previously received from the Lord in Kharadoha, and she thereby resolved in her mind to quickly depart for Gauda.

One day she went to the temple of Sri Radha-Gopinath in Vrindavan and stood looking at the deities. In a mood of supreme prankishness she thought to herself, "It would be very nice if Sri Radhika was a little taller." Considering like this in her mind, she said nothing to anyone else.

After seeing the last *arati* ceremony in the evening, she returned to her residence. As she slept, Sri Gopinath appeared to Sri Jahnava in the guise of a dream and spoke with sweet words, "My Beloved is not as tall as I am. It is a great prank that we are seen to be different. Returning quickly to Gauda, you will manifest another form of my Beloved and send her here. She will live by my left side -- this will surely be seen." Then Sri Radhika laughed and said to Jahnava, "Please don't be hesitant in this regard -- it is also my desire."

Saying this much, the Divine Couple disappeared from Jahnava's vision, and she immediately awoke and happily looked all around. Seeing that morning had come, she very jubilantly felt a gracious mood, and with her eyes brimming with tears she said, "I will incessantly meditate on how to have a Beloved made for him." Isvari's eyes moved in expression of these deliberations in her mind, and she thus firmly resolved that she would have such a deity fashioned. She kept all these topics secret, but Gopinath himself revealed everything through someone else. The ways of Sri Gopinath cannot be understood by anyone. In the guise of a dream, he also personally gave a flower garland to Jahnava. And the pranks that were similarly played by Sri Govinda and Madan-Mohan will be described later by some fortunate soul.

SRI ISVARI BIDS FAREWELL TO ALL THE DEVOTEES IN VRINDAVAN BEFORE HER RETURN JOURNEY TO GAUDA

(250) Sri Isvari's impending return to Gauda-mandala was confirmed by all the Vrindavan Goswamis. The news was broadcast everywhere that Jahnava Isvari was soon departing, and all the Vaisnavas who lived in solitary places immediately came to Vrindavan to see her off. She went everywhere bidding farewell, though even the thought of leaving was greatly disturbing to her heart. She went to visit Sri Govinda, Gopinath and Madan-Mohan, and just to see them caused profuse tears to flow from her eyes in the most astonishing way. She went to see Sri Radha-Vinoda, Radha-Damodar and Radha-Raman, and she felt extremely restless. What did she say in her heart of hearts when she saw the deity of Lord Siva known as Gopisvar? She went to visit the deity of Vrinda Devi and then gradually saw all the other holy places one by one. When she beheld the four samadhi tombs of Raghunath Bhatta Goswami, Sri Pandit Kashishvar, Sri Sanatan Goswami and the most learned Sri Rupa, her heart was broken as she cried and cried in great sorrow. When she saw the tomb of Gauridas Pandit, she was unable to check the flow of profuse tears from her eyes. It was incomprehensible what astonishing thing was seen there, and what the devotee named Badu Ganga Das said to Jahnava again and again. Hearing the statements of Badu Gangadas, she became pacified. At this point, I will give some information about Badu Gangadas.

TOPICS ABOUT BADU GANGADAS

(262) The name of Sri Jahnava's mother is Bhadravati. She was extremely devoted to her husband Surya Das. Seeing the methods of devotional service performed by Bhadravati, everyone was astonished. The son of her elder sister was named Gangadas. He was the disciple of Gauridas Pandit, and was pervaded with ecstatic prema. When Gauridas left this world, Gangadas had some doubt about maintaining his own life here. But in the guise of a dream, Gauridas appeared and ordered him to immediately go to Vrindavan. There he lived in a solitary place by the side of his *guru's* tomb at Sri Dhira-Samira and worshiped the Lord.

While wandering amongst the holy spots headed by Govardhan he heard that Sri Jahnava had suddenly arrived. Coming to Vrindavan, he had the *darshan* of Sri Isvari. Thus I have narrated a brief description of Gangadas's story.

SRI JAHNAVA'S DEPARTURE FROM VRAJA

(269) While Sri Isvari was taking leave all over Vrindavan, someone gave her a *sri-vigraha,* a deity of Krishna along with his beloved. Her mind was very elated to receive such an uncommon form of the Lord, and she engaged Badu Gangadas in serving him. She showed great favor to Gangadas and informed him, "I will take you along in my company."

As the night ended and the morning dawned, all the devotees became very anxious about the impending journey to Gauda. Sri Govinda and his fellow students went very attentively before the Goswamis and offered

their obeisances again and again with their eyes flowing with tears of farewell. Sri Gopal Bhatta embraced Govinda and spoke sweetly to him -- who could retain their composure upon hearing such statements? Sri Lokanath Goswami showed great affection to Govinda. Then he very gently told Govinda to give the following message to Narottam, "You should be very attentive in your *seva* to the Lord's deity form. With your body, mind and words you should respect the Vaisnavas. You should endeavor to observe the holy days associated with the pastimes of the Lord Vishnu and the Vaisnavas. You should taste the mellows of devotion *(bhakti-rasa)* along with Ramachandra. Please also give this same message to Srinivas."

Saying this much, Lokanath was unable to speak anything more. There are no words that can be used to indicate the statements made by Bhugarbha Goswami for Govinda to relate to Narottam and Srinivas. Sri Jiva affectionately spoke to Govinda, "What more can be said with mere words? Just speak my message to everyone in Gauda by giving them my loving embrace! Eventually I will get to see Srinivas again. In the meantime, I will occasionally send letters to him. Previously I had described some nectarean songs to him and promised to send them. I am now giving them for you to take to him, and in the future I will send more."

Saying this, Sri Jiva gave Govinda a copy of his latest writing called *Gopal Virudavali*, which he composed after being personally instructed in a dream by Sri Rupa Goswami.

Greatly learned devotees like Krishnadas Kaviraj and others said so many things to Govinda and embraced him. Then they approached the devotees headed by Bhagavan Kaviraj and expressed their affection by squeezing them in very tight embraces. After bidding farewell, everyone returned to their own residences and passed the night with extremely disturbed hearts.

In the morning, all the Goswamis retained their composure with great effort and quickly came to where Jahnava Isvari was staying. Whether woman or man, all the Vraja-vasis came to see her, and no one had a peaceful mind. I am unable to speak of the restlessness Isvari felt in the company of Krishna Das, Madhava and the others. She departed for Gauda from Vrindavan at an auspicious moment, and was surrounded by the greatest of the devotees *(mahabhagavats)*. Going to Akrura-ghat on the outer border of the town, Jahnava Isvari was utterly overwhelmed to behold the beauty and splendor of Vrindavan. At that place, Sri Isvari became soaked with tears falling from her eyes as she said goodbye to all the Goswamis. Sri Bhatta Goswami and the rest were very distressed, and they made parting statements that I couldn't possibly describe.

At the time of their departure, all the Vraja-vasis cried and sobbed about the divine qualities of Sri Jahnava. All the great souls that were accompanying Sri Isvari exchanged farewell wishes with the residents of Vrindavan in extreme sorrow. Sri Jiva Goswami and the others traveled with Sri Isvari with greatly troubled hearts as far as Mathura. There the group rested for the day, and the *vipras* of that town showed them supreme honor. Then, with great endeavor, Ma Jahnava managed to bid a final sad farewell to Sri Jiva and the others, and left Mathura with an utterly broken heart.

* * * * *

[Returning to Gauda, Ma Jahnava and her entourage travel around Bengal and visit many devotees in different places. She goes to Eka-chakra, the birthplace of her departed husband Sri Nityananda Prabhu. There, an old vipra narrates the glories of Eka-chakra, then describes the family lineage and childhood pastimes of Nityananda. She sadly feels Nityananda's separation, but he appears to her that night in a dream and pacifies her. Later, she has a deity of Sri Radhika fashioned (as per the order of Gopinath), and sends it to Vrindavan on a boat, amidst much celebration and kirtan....]

* * * * *

SOME SONGS BY ŚRĪLA BHAKTIVINODA ṬHĀKURA mentioning ŚRĪ JĀHNAVĀ DEVĪ

(from Kalyāṇa-Kalpa-Taru)

* * * * *

nikhila vaiṣṇava-jana doyā prakāśiya
śrī-jāhnavā-pade more rākhaha tāniya

I pray to all you assembled Vaiṣṇavas throughout the entire universe to please show your compassion by attracting me to the shade of the lotus feet of Śrī Jāhnavā Devī, my eternal shelter and the very pleasure potency of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu.

* * * * *

THE OCEAN OF MATERIAL EXISTENCE

(1)
bhavārṇave pa'ḍe mor ākula parāṇ
kise kula pā'bo, tā'r nā pāi sandhān

(2)
nā āche karama-bala, nāhi jñāna-bala
jāga-joga-tapodharma -- nā āche sambala

(3)
nitānta durbala āmi, nā jāni sāṅtār
e bipade ke āmāre koribe uddhār?

(4)
biṣaya-kubhīra tāhe bhīṣaṇa-darśana
kāmer taraṅga sadā kore' uttejana

(5)
prāttana-vāyur vega sahite nā pāri
kāṅdiya asthira mana, nā dekhi kāṇḍārī

(6)
ogo śrī jāhnavā devī! e dāse koruṇā
koro' āji nija-guṇe, ghucāo jantranā

(7)
tomār caraṇa-tarī koriyā āśroy
bhavārṇava pār ha'ba korechi niścoy

(8)
tumi nityānanda-śakti kṛṣṇa-bhakti-guru
e dāse koroho dāna pada-kalpa-taru

(9)
kota kota pāmarere ko'recho uddhār
tomār caraṇe āj e kāṅgāl chār

(1) Having fallen into this vast ocean of material existence, my heart has become extremely worried. I search for the shore, but have no idea how to reach it. (2) I have no strength from my previous *karma* or from all my knowledge. Nor do I have any help from virtues accrued by sacrifices, *yoga* practice or austerities. (3) I am extremely feeble, and I don't know how to swim. Who will rescue me from this dreadful calamity? (4) I see the horrible alligator of sense gratification present before me, and the waves of lust are constantly agitating and provoking me. (5) I can no longer cope with all the urges that are pushing me like a raging wind from my previous births. I simply weep with an agitated mind, for there is no rescuer in sight. (6) Oh most revered Jāhnavā Devī! Please show mercy to this servant today by virtue of your own good qualities, and kindly relieve all his afflictions. (7) By taking shelter in the boat of Your lotus feet I will certainly be able to cross over this vast ocean of material existence. (8) You are the very pleasure potency of Lord Nityānanda, and you are the teacher of devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Kindly bestow upon this servant the wish-fulfilling desire-tree of your lotus feet. (9) Thus, this most wretched and shameful rogue begs at your feet today, for he sees that you are delivering many other sinners.

* * * * *

LONGING

(1)
kabe mor śubha-dina hoibe udoy
bṛndābana-dhāma mama hoibe āśroy

ghucibe saṁsāra-jvālā, biṣaya-bāsanā
baiṣṇabe-saṁsarge mor puribe kāmanā

(3)
dhūlaya dhūsara ho'ye hari-saṁkīrtane
matta ho'ye pa'ḍe ro'ba baiṣṇaba-caraṇe

(4)
kabe śrī jamunā-tīre kadamba-kānane
heribo jugala-rūpa hṛdoya-nayane

(5)
kabe sakhī kṛpā kori' jugala-sevāy
niyukta koribe more rākhi' nija pā'y

(6)
kabe bā jugala-līlā ko'ri daraśana
premānanda-bhare āmi ha'ba acetana

(7)
katakṣaṇa acetana paḍiyā rahibo
āpan śarīr āmi kabe pāśaribo?

(8)
uṭhiyā smaribo punaḥ acetana-kāle
jā' deḳhinu kṛṣṇa-līlā bhāsi' āṅhki-jale

(9)
kākuti minati kori' baiṣṇaba-sadane
bolibo bhakati-bindu deha' e durjane

(10)
śrī anaṅga mañjarīr caraṇa śaraṇa
e bhakativinoda āśā kore' anukṣaṇa

(1) When will that auspicious day dawn when I will achieve full shelter in the transcendental abode of Vṛndāvana? (2) The burning fire of this material world will cease, as well as all desires for sense gratification, for by being with the devotees of the Lord all my longings will be fulfilled. (3) Becoming maddened by their chanting of the holy name of the Lord, I will fall down and roll in the dust at the devotees' feet, completely covering myself with that sacred powder. (4) When, in a *kadamba* grove on the bank of the Yamunā river, will I behold the beauty of the Divine Couple within the eyes of my heart? (5) When will a *sakhī* show her gracious mercy to me by engaging me in conjugal service, keeping me at her own lotus feet? (6) And when will I catch a glimpse of Their divine conjugal pastimes? Becoming filled with the ecstasy of pure spiritual love I will lose consciousness. (7) Falling down, I will remain unconscious for a long time, and will completely forget about my own body. (8) Regaining consciousness, I will again remember that sight which I saw while in trance -- *darśana* of the ecstatic pastimes of Kṛṣṇa that caused me to swim in an ocean of tears. (9) Making repeated requests in the presence of the devotees, I will ask them to give just one drop of the ocean of devotion to this wicked person. (10) Bhaktivinoda's incessant longing is for the shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Anaṅga Mañjarī. *(Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's little sister, the original form of Śrī Jāhnavā Devī, who is Lord Nityānanda's consort and pleasure potency.)*

* * * * *

HOW TO TAKE SHELTER OF VṚNDĀVANA

(1)
kabe mor muḍha mana chāḍi anya dhyāna
śrī-kṛṣṇa-caraṇe pābe biśramer sthāna

(2)
kabe āmi jānibo āpane akiñcana
āmār apekṣā kṣudra nāhi anya jana

(3)
kabe āmi ācaṇḍāle koribo praṇati
kṛṣṇa-bhakti māgi laba koriyā minati

(4)
sarva-jīve doyā mor kota dine habe
jīver durgati dekhi lotaka paḍipe

(5)
kāṅdite kāṅdite āmi jābo bṛndābana
braja-dhāme baiṣṇaber loibo śaraṇa

(6)
braja-bāsī-sannidhāne juḍi dui kar
jijñāsibo līlā-sthāna hoiyā kātar

(7)
ohe braja-bāsī! more anugraha kori
dekhao kothāy līlā korilena hari

(8)
tabe kon braja-jana sakṛpa-antare
āmāre jābena loye bipina-bhitore

(9)
bolibena, dekho ei kadamba-kānana
jathā rāsa-līlā koilā brajendra-nandana

(10)
ai dekho nanda-grāma nander āvāsa
ai dekho baladeva jathā koilo rāsa

(11)
ai dekho jathā hoilo dukūla-haraṇa
ai sthāne bakāsura hoilo nidhana

(12)
ei-rūpe braja-jana-saha bṛndābane
dekhibo līlār sthāna satṛṣṇa-nayane

(13)
kabhu bā jamunā tīre śuni' baṁśī-dhvani
abaśa hoiyā lābha koribo dharanī

(14)
kṛpāmoy braja-jana 'kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa' boli'
pāna korāibe jal pūriya añjali

(15)
hari-nāma śune punaḥ pāiyā cetana
braja-jana-saha āmi koribo bhramaṇa

(16)
kabe heno śubha-dina hoibe āmār
mādhukorī kori' beḍāibo dvār dvār

(17)
jamunā-salilā pibo añjali bhariyā
deva-dvāre ratri-kāle rohibo śuiyā

(18)
jakhan āsibe kāla e bhautika pura
jala-jantu-mahotsava hoibe pracura

(19)
siddha dehe nija-kuñje sakhīra caraṇe
nitya-kāla thākiya sevibo kṛṣṇa-dhane

(20)
ei se prārthana kore' e pāmara chār
śrī jāhnavā more doyā koro' ei-bār

(1) When, oh when will my foolish ass-like mind finally attain a place to rest at the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, rejecting all other meditations? (2) When will I finally understand my own worthlessness? Actually there is no other soul who is lower than me. (3) When will I offer my respectful obeisances to all the untouchables? Submitting prayers unto them, I will humbly beg for a drop of devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. (4) And when will I finally exhibit real compassion to all living entities? Seeing the degradation of the conditioned souls, I will fall to the ground crying. (5) Weeping and weeping, I will sadly go to Śrī Vṛndāvana, and will take shelter of a Vaiṣṇava in that abode of Vraja. (6) Standing before a resident of Vraja I will grasp both his hands and question him intensively about all the holy places of the Lord's pastimes there. (7) I will say: "Oh resident of Vraja! Please exhibit your favor and kindly show me where all the pastimes of Hari have taken place!" (8) Then, with a gracious heart, that resident of the *dhāma* will personally take me into the depths of the forest. (9) He will say: "Just look there! That is the *kadamba* grove in which the delightful Son of Mahārāja Nanda sported the *rāsa* dance." (10) "Look! Here is Nanda-grāma, which is the residence of Kṛṣṇa's parents, Nanda and Yaśodā. Look! Here is where Lord Balarāma sported His own *rāsa* dance." (11) "Look! Here is where Lord Kṛṣṇa stole the clothes of all the *gopīs* as they bathed. And just see this place! It is where the demon Bakāsura met his fate."

(12) In this fashion I will behold all the places of pastimes in Vṛndāvana with my intensely thirsty eyes in the company of the residents of Vraja. (13) If ever I hear the vibration of a flute upon the banks of the Yamunā river, then becoming ecstatically overwhelmed I will fall senseless upon the earth. (14) Chanting the holy names, "Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!" into my ears, then the all-merciful residents of Vraja will take a palmful of Yamunā water and make me drink. (15) By hearing the holy names being vibrated and again becoming conscious, I will then continue wandering about in the company of the Brijbāsīs.

(16) When, oh when will such auspicious days be mine? Begging a little food like a bee (*mādhukorī*) I will wander from door to door. (17) I will drink a little water from the Yamunā, filling my palm. And at night I will go to sleep by the door of some temple I happen to wander near. (18) Then that time will come when this material body will become a tasty feast for all of the aquatics. (When it is thrown into the river at the time of death.) (19) Then, living eternally in my spiritual body, at the feet of a *gopī* in her own grove, I will finally serve my greatly treasured Lord Kṛṣṇa. (20) Oh Jāhnavā Devī! Please show your causeless mercy to me now! This is all that is prayed for today by this desperate, worthless sinner.

* * * * *

KEY EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF SRI NITYANANDA PRABHU

(as quoted from Sri Bhakti-ratnakar)

Nityananda Prabhu was born and raised in the village of Eka-chakra in Bengal, but he only stayed home until the age of 12 years. Then he left with a traveling *sannyasi* and wandered to all the major holy places of pilgrimage, behaving like an avadhuta, a divine madman. This pilgrimage continued for 8 years, because he knew that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was busy sporting his own childhood pastimes, and had not yet revealed his true identity. But when Sri Nityananda was touring the sacred forests of Vraja at the age of 20 years, he knew that it was now time to join the preaching mission of Lord Chaitanya, who had just recently began his ecstatic manifestations of divine love. Therefore he quickly went to Bengal and met Sri Mahaprabhu at the house of Nandan Acharya in Navadvipa.

Later, he preached with the Lord throughout many pastimes, including the deliverance of the two rascals Jagai and Madhai. Then, after Sri Mahaprabhu accepted the renounced order of life, Lord Nityananda accompanied him on the trip to Jagannath Puri, detouring the Lord first through Shantipur to see Sri Advaita Acharya. Then after some time in Puri, Lord Chaitanya asked Nityananda Prabhu to return to Bengal. He spoke to Nityananda in a solitary place, and it is said that Mahaprabhu ordered Nityananda to get married. So he thus returned to Bengal and visited the town of Panihati and instigated the huge chipped rice and yoghurt festival there, as recorded in the *Chaitanya-charitamrita*. Then he went to Navadvipa and stayed in the house of Sri Gadadhara Das; then on to Kharadoha to stay in the temple of Purandar Pandit; then to Sapta-gram to visit Uddharan Datta; then to Shantipur to visit Sri Advaita Acharya; then back to Navadvipa for many pastimes; at this point, Sri Nityananda had the desire to get married, so the devotees became very jubilant and helped arrange his matching with the two young and beautiful daughters of Surya Das Pandit named Jahnava and Vasudha.

After enjoying his pastimes as a householder for many years, Nityananda Prabhu sported his disappearance *lila*. This pastime is apparently not mentioned in *Bhakti-ratnakar*, although it is described how Srinivas Acharya was greatly saddened to hear about it.

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THE LIFE OF SRI NITYANANDA PRABHU

a short excerpt from Sri Sri Bhakti-ratnakara by Sri Narahari Cakravarti Thakura

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THE LIFE OF SRI NITYANANDA PRABHU

(from Sri Bhakti-ratnakara 5.2237-2358)

(. . .Sri Raghava Pandita Prabhu takes Srinivas Acharya, Narottam Das Thakur and Shyamananda Pandit on Vraja-parikrama, a tour of the sacred forests of Krishna's pastimes; during his discussion of topics concerning Shringar-vata in Sri Vrindavan, Raghava Pandita outlines a brief summary of the life and pastimes of Sri Nityananda Prabhu thus. . .)

Oh Srinivasa! Narottama Thakura! Just see this amazing banyan tree on the bank of the Yamuna river! Everyone calls it "Shringar-vata." At this spot, Lord Krishna had many pastimes while being decorated with nice clothing and ornaments. Thus, he increased the ecstatic jubilation of his cowherd boyfriends headed by Subala. This spot is also known as "Nityananda-vata." Some people call it by one name, and some call it by another -- but both are factual. This is because Lord Nityananda also visited this spot. Now listen carefully, and I will briefly recount the story of how Nityananda Prabhu came here.

Another part of Lord Caitanya's body is known as Nityananda-Rama
His birthplace is in Rardha-desa, known as Eka-chakra-dhama
His father is Hadai Pandit, his mother Padmavati
Their lives absorbed in him lovingly --
to describe, who has the shakti?

In the topmost bliss sported Padmavati's son
In Eka-chakra-gram divine pastimes he has done
He performed the lilas of all incarnations with glee
And all those ecstasies he allowed the townspeople to see.

All the residents of Eka-chakra are greatly fortunate; indeed, only Nityananda-chandra is the very wealth of their life and soul. Nityananda Prabhu caused them to increase their loving affection unlimitedly. However, he stayed at home only up to the age of 12 years. Who can possibly comprehend the inner desires of Sri Nityananda? In the absence of Sri Krishna Caitanya, he was never actually satisfied or peaceful.

SRI NITYANANDA DECIDES TO LEAVE HOME

One day, Nityananda Prabhu was contemplating something very deeply within his mind. He thought, "I really want to go to Navadvipa, but it is not the proper time yet. Although Sri Krishna Caitanya has manifested now in Navadvipa, he is shrouding himself with the covering of all his childhood pastimes. When he finally exposes himself and sports with his devotees, then I will travel to Navadvipa and join him. In the meantime I will leave soon for a tour of all the holy places of pilgrimage." Thinking thus, Nityananda Prabhu felt happy and laughed within his mind.

Just then, a great sannyasi arrived in town. He asked the townspeople for the home of Hadai Pandita. Being informed of the directions by them, the sannyasi went to the house of Hado Ojha. When Ojha saw the sannyasi arrive, he felt the greatest happiness, and immediately had all kinds of food prepared, and invited the sannyasi to take the meal. The sannyasi inquired, "Vipra, I have just one thing to ask from you. If you first promise to fulfill it, then only will I eat." Being assured avowedly by Ohja, the sannyasi then accepted the meal. Afterwards, as he was about to leave, he made the request -- he asked if he could bring Nityananda along on his travels.

Nityananda Prabhu's mind was perfectly calm and unagitated; taking leave of his father and mother, he left home and traveled with the sannyasi. In this way, he was able to extricate himself from his home life. This is a most astonishing pastime -- who is the intelligent person that could possibly understand all these activities of his?

Nityananda Prabhu's age was so young and fresh, and his splendrous beauty was completely enchanting to all the worlds. Whoever looked upon his form instantly felt their own eyes soothed and comforted. Nityananda was so full of ecstatic love that in whatever direction he moved, crowds of people would rush along in the same direction, all overwhelmed with restless hearts. The Lord showed his favor to all those people. Thus Ekeshwar, the Lord and Master of Eka-chakra, traveled on with the stately gait of the King of Elephants.

HE TOURS THE HOLY PLACES AS FAR AS PANDERAPURA, MAHARASTRA

In the same fashion that he had previously toured during the age of Dwapara-yuga (as Lord Balaram), Sri Nityananda Prabhu visited all the same holy places of pilgrimage. While wandering about in South India, he arrived in Pandura-pura. There he took darshan of the local deity, Sri Vitthala-nath. Residing in that town was a gentle and quiet brahmana who was a Godbrother of Sri Madhavendra Puri, being the disciple of Sri Lakshmi-pati. That vipra brought Nityananda Prabhu to his own home and fed him fruits, vegetables and milk with great care and attention. Thus all the residents of Pandura-pura were highly fortunate, for they were able to soothe their hearts by seeing the divine form of Lord Nityananda. Who could possibly understand the intentions of the Lord? He left the vipra's home and stayed in a solitary place, occasionally coming into town to take darshan of Sri Vitthala-nath.

SRI LAKSHMI-PATI ARRIVES

Suddenly the vipra was greatly alarmed, for his guru Sri Lakshmi-pati had just arrived in town unexpectedly. Thus he quickly prepared to greet and serve his spiritual master. Lakshmi-pati had come from afar, and was accompanied by many, many disciples. He was extremely learned in all the scriptures, and he showed such fatherly affection for his disciples that no one could possibly even begin to recount it. He was very old at the time, and his activities were simply indescribable. He was very well-known everywhere, for he was an extremely honorable authority of the path of bhakti. Who is able to properly portray the real glories of Sri Lakshmi-pati? The highest zenith of his glory is that his disciple was the famous Sri Madhavendra Puri. Madhavendra Puri is thoroughly pervaded with prema-bhakti-rasa -- the most relishable flowing mellows of pure devotional service. One achieves all perfection simply upon the remembrance of his name. Madhavendra in turn had many disciples, such as Sri Ishwara Puri, Sri Ranga Puri, and others. Indeed, each and every one of Madhavendra's disciples were madly intoxicated with bhakti-rasa. All of Madhavendra's followers in Gauda-desa, Utkala (Orissa) and South India were staunch devotees of Lord Krishna, and were very attached to performing pure loving devotional service unto the Lord. Madhavendra is famous within the Madhva-sampradaya; he is just like a deep ocean of good qualities, and he is very dear to Sri Lakshmi-pati.

Sri Lakshmi-pati thus arrived at the home of his disciple -- the vipra of Pandura-pura, who had just previously invited Sri Nityananda Prabhu to his home. Lakshmi-pati accepted his meal, and absorbed himself in discussing many topics of Krishna-katha. But in between the talks, Lakshmi-pati would again and again remark, "What kind of special auspiciousness do I perceive in your house today? I have previously come here so many times before, but never before has my mind been so overwhelmed by such ecstatic pleasure as I feel now! Which great devotee's house am I visiting, anyway?" The vipra replied, "Your favor alone is the most powerful thing here."

By the Lord's will, the vipra had not remembered that Sri Nityananda Prabhu was present in his home just a short while before. Thus a few days were passed in discussing many other things.

LAKSMIPATI'S VISION OF LORD BALARAMA

One day Sri Lakshmi-pati, the best of sannyasis, was sitting in a solitary place doing his bhajan throughout the night. He was singing of the charming life and character of Lord Baladeva, Sri Krishna's elder brother. He had unalloyed devotion for Prabhu Baladeva -- it was so intense that he would cry and call out, "Ohe Baladeva, I am so wicked and fallen! Kindly show Your merciful favor to such a rogue! If You would do this, then Your glory would certainly be spread throughout all the universe!"

Saying this much, Lakshmi-pati was not able to keep his patience. He rolled about on the ground uncontrollably, tears gushing profusely from his eyes. He was so old, and further, he was intensely afflicted with distress -- he became so uncontrollably disturbed that I couldn't possibly describe his condition. Although he was incredibly agitated with anxiety, and was not able to feel peace for a moment, he suddenly became sleepy and dozed off, by the Lord's will.

Then Lord Nityananda, in his typically prankish mood, appeared in Lakshmi-pati's dream in the form of Lord Balarama. What astounding beauty! He put to shame the universal monopoly of Cupid! His body was so super-sweet that it literally conquered the beauty of a mountain of silver. His arms extended fully to his knees, and his chest was very broad. The way he moved his eyes was enchanting, for they were spread right around to his ears. On one ear he wore an earring which was capable of mesmerizing the entire universe. In the left side of his waist cloth he had pushed his sweet buffalo horn in a most pleasing way. His entire body was decorated with many different kinds of ornaments -- ornaments for which there is no comparison anywhere within the entire universe. The orb of his face conquered the vision of the full moon, and on the plea of speaking words, he actually poured forth a series of undulating waves saturated with pure, nectarean ambrosia.

Thus Lord Balarama began to slowly speak very soothingly to Lakshmi-pati, "My heart has completely melted upon hearing your pitiful lamentations. Ohe Lakshmi-pati! Sri Krishna is My Praneshwara -- the very Lord of My life! May you become his humble servant birth after birth." Lakshmi-pati caught hold of the Lord's feet and submitted, "I never make any such distinction between You and Him -- You are Both my worshipable Lords."

Hearing these words of Lakshmi-pati, Prabhu Baladeva smiled and replied, "The son of a brahmana has arrived in this town. He is in the dress of an avadhuta -- a wandering madman -- and he will become your disciple. You just initiate him as your disciple with this mantra . . ." Balarama then spoke a mantra into Lakshmi-pati's ear. Lakshmi-pati felt very happy to hear the mantra, and then the Lord suddenly disappeared. Thus the Lord showed his kindness and mercy.

LAKSHMI-PATI MEETS AND INITIATES LORD NITYANANDA

In the morning, Lakshmi-pati awoke and his mind was overrun with anxious anticipation. Just then, Nityananda Prabhu suddenly arrived on the spot. Lakshmi-pati looked at the effulgent aura emanating from Nityananda and thought, "What an uncommon aura! Here is no ordinary human being, without a doubt!" Considering thus, the most learned Lakshmi-pati simply gazed upon

Nityananda's lovely, divine face with unblinking eyes. Nityananda offered his obeisances and began rolling about in the dust, but Lakshmi-pati hastily caught him and pulled him into his own lap. Nityananda asked him again and again, "Please give me mantra-diksha and deliver Me."

Hearing these sweet words of Nityananda, Lakshmi-pati's eyes simply brimmed with swelling tears, and he lost all his patience. Since he was unable to transgress the order of Lord Baladeva, he initiated Nityananda that very day with the diksha-mantra. After giving the mantra, he took Nityananda Prabhu into his lap and became completely overwhelmed with the joy which arose within his heart. Thus the most merciful Nityananda became the favorite of Sri Lakshmi-pati. And what isn't possible for him? He does everything as he likes, according to his own sweet will. Thus Lord Nityananda Prabhu, who is Bhakata-vatsala (most affectionate to His devotees), and who is Premananda-kanda (the fountainhead source of ecstatic bliss), unlimitedly increased the jubilation of the Madhva-sampradaya.

As is stated in one old verse:

nityananda-prabhum vande
srimal laksmipati-priyam
sri madhva-sampradananda
vardhanam bhakta-vatsalam

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto Sri Nityananda Prabhu, the dear favorite of Sriman Lakshmi-pati. He increases the bliss of the entire Madhva-sampradaya, and he is very affectionate to all the devotees."

LAKSHMI-PATI RECEIVES ANOTHER VISION

Thus Nityananda Prabhu became the disciple of Sri Lakshmi-pati, whose extremely uncommon bliss increased. But then Nityananda left that place very quickly and went elsewhere. No one could possibly understand all these pastimes of the Lord. In Nityananda's absence, Lakshmi-pati became most restless and would not speak to anyone, and he remained very deeply absorbed in his own mental anguish. He stayed up that night, but toward the end of the night he started to doze off slightly.

Then Nityananda Prabhu showed himself again, on the pretext of a dream. Seeing this vision, Lakshmi-pati was not able to restrain himself from shedding incessant tears. Within a split second, Nityananda suddenly transformed into Baladeva-murti, the form of Lord Balarama. Seeing this, Lakshmi-pati fell down at his divine lotus feet. Drenching himself with his own tears, Lakshmi-pati again prayed to Lord Balarama. He said, "This incarnation of Yours has come just to make a fool of me! All the demigods headed by Lord Brahma can understand nothing of this, what to speak of others! Only those whom You inform personally can understand Your pastimes. Why have You thus made mockery of this most fallen wretch? Please show me Your mercy now, for I have taken full shelter of Your lotus feet!"

Hearing these words of Lakshmi-pati, Lord Balarama instantly transformed back into Nityananda-murti. The incredible sweetness of his divine beauty shone just like a shimmering series of lightning flashes. Lakshmi-pati thus became very restless to behold such a majestic splendor. Nityananda-rama then manifested the limit of his causeless mercy and completely fulfilled all of Sri Lakshmi-pati's most cherished longings. Then he forbade him from revealing this to anyone, and disappeared from sight.

SRI LAKSHMI-PATI PASSES AWAY

Lakshmi-pati became most miserable upon the Lord's disappearance; he could sleep no longer, and he noticed that the night had come to an end. He remained completely agitated, and would not speak to anyone. From that day onward, his condition became such that it would astonish anyone. Seeing this condition, all of his disciples became full of anxiety. Then, without any warning, Sri Lakshmi-pati suddenly left this world. Who can possibly understand his character properly to be able to put it into words? Indeed, he is famous in this world as 'Nityananda-priya' -- very dear to Sri Nityananda Prabhu. Likewise it is impossible to speak of the intense devotion of the residents of Pandura-pura. To this very day, very powerful devotional service to the Lord is being performed there by the mercy of Nitai.

SRI NITYANANDA MEETS MADHAVENDRA PURI

Afterwards, Sri Nityananda Prabhu, according to his own sweet will, continued wandering about to all the different places of pilgrimage. As he traveled, his heart reflected his own ecstatic jubilation. A few days later, he met Sri Madhavendra Puri near the holy place known as Pratichi-tirtha. Who will dare to try to describe the prema that manifested upon their meeting? Only he who has witnessed such a meeting could possibly understand it. When they were together, Madhavendra considered Nityananda as his own close friend. However, Nityananda considered Madhavendra to be like his own worshipable spiritual master.

(In the *Sri Caitanya-bhagavat*, Sri Madhavendra Puri is quoted as follows:)

janihu krsner prema ache mor prati
nityananda heno bandhu painu samprati

"Now I can understand that Krishna has shown His real love for me today, for I have obtained such a friend as Nityananda."

Nityananda Mahashay showed respect toward Madhavendra as if he were his own guru. Indeed, he could not behave otherwise. Madhavendra's disciples, headed by Sri Ishwara Puri, saw all this and were highly astonished. Thus all of them developed a very deep love for Nityananda Prabhu. Several days passed as Madhavendra and Nityananda completely immersed themselves in Krishna-rasa, and they spent day and night feeling great happiness.

NITYANANDA PRABHU CONTINUES TRAVELING

Then Nityananda bade farewell to Madhavendra and left Pratichi-tirtha to go for darshana at Setubandha and Rameshwaram. Sri Madhavendra also bade farewell and left with Ishwara Puri and his other disciples to travel to Sarayu Tirtha. Feeling separation from each other, they became just like dead bodies, but they both obtained relief by feeling the same ecstasy of Krishna-prema. Still, Sri Nityananda was supremely self-controlled, and he wandered everywhere without being able to remain in one place for very long.

HE COMES TO SRI VRAJA-MANDALA

After a few days, he arrived in Mathura-nagara. There he was so caught up in behaving like a small boy that he would play with all the village boys in great fun. Whoever would simply glance upon Nityananda-chanda once, that person would become so helplessly attached to him that he could not give up his company for even a half-second. The very form of Nityananda Raya was

so super-sweet to behold that innumerable people ran from all directions to see him. Nityananda Prabhu had no fixed residence -- he could not stay in one place -- and so he wandered all over Vraja in the greatest delight. By and by he went to Sri Gokula at Mahavana to see the deity named Madana-gopal, and he stayed briefly at that place. Seeing the house of Nanda Maharaja there, he felt such an upsurge of emotion within his mind that he began to cry. Then he continued wandering all around Vraja.

(These wanderings are described thus in the *Sri Caitanya-bhagavat, Adi-khanda:*)

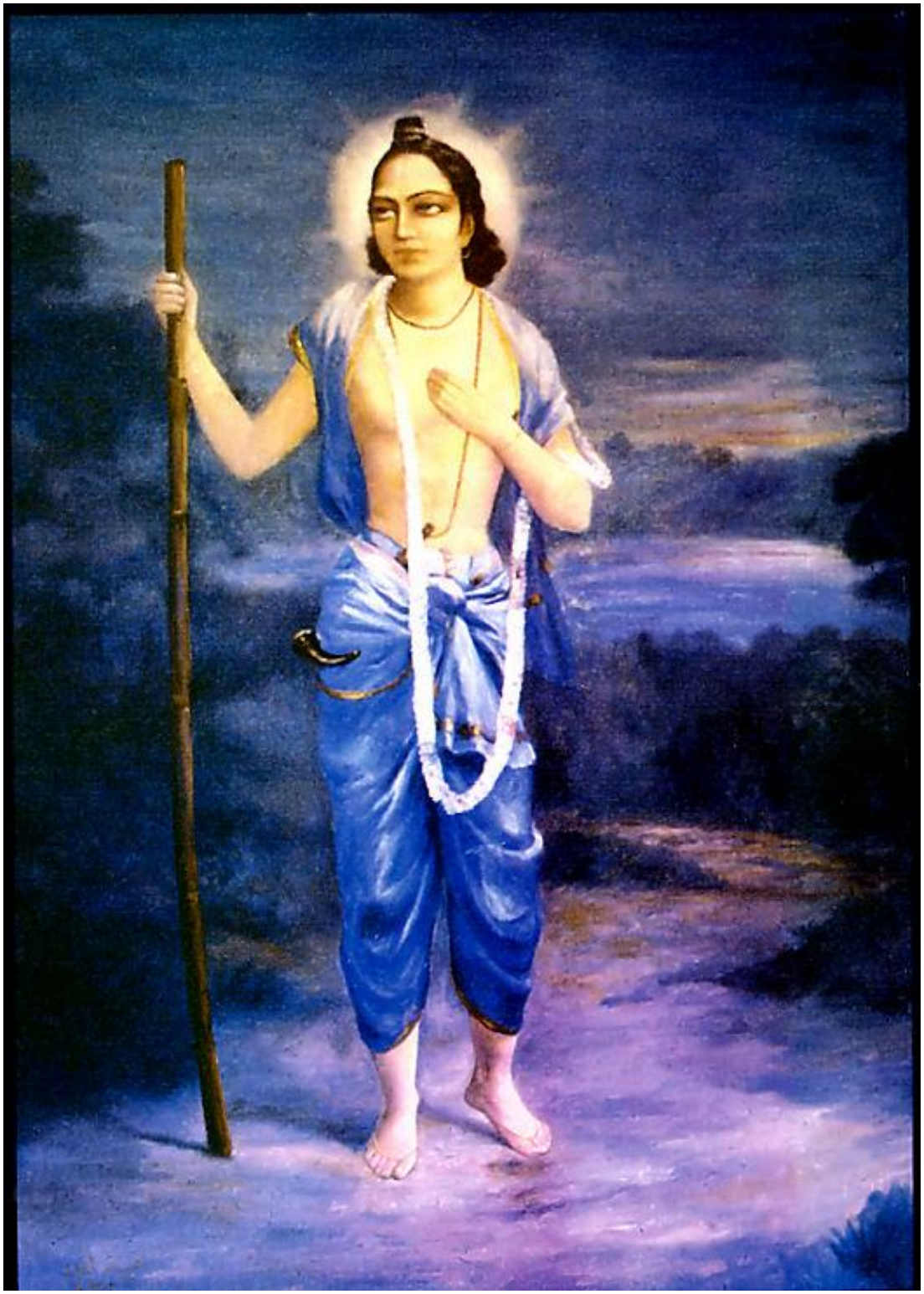
> "In Gokula, he saw the house of Nanda and stayed for some time. Sitting in that place, he cried profusely. Offering his obeisances to Sri Madana-gopal, he went to Hastinapura, the capital of the Pandavas. Visiting all the forests on the way, he eventually arrived in Sri Vrindavan. There he played many amazing games by the bank of the Yamuna."

HE HANKERS FOR GAURANGA AT SHRINGAR VATA

Oh Srinivas! Narottam! Then Sri Nityananda Prabhu came to this uncommon banyan tree named Shringar-vata or Nityananda-vata. One second he would sit down; the next second, he would roll about in the dust; the next second, he would decorate himself with many different kinds of flowers; the next second, he would exclaim, "Where is my life and soul Kanai?" Overwhelmed in ecstatic love, his entire body would shiver as his wide eyes flowed with profuse tears. Thus Nityananda sported in and around Vrindavan. Who could factually comprehend his activities? Thereafter, Nityananda Prabhu understood that Sri Gaura-sundara had been so far sporting his pastimes in a covered, secret way, and that he had only recently revealed his pastimes in an obvious way for all to see. Thinking of this made Nityananda-Haladhara laugh within his mind, and his body was continuously studded with bumps of pure joy. He became restless, being attracted by Mahaprabhu all the way from Navadvipa. Thus he departed for Navadvipa from this place, Nityananda-vata.

CONCLUSION

Thus Nityananda Prabhu wandered to all the holy places of pilgrimage from the age of 12 until the age of 20 years. Who can begin to relate all of these pastimes in detail?

Whoever sees this Nityananda-vata, the playground of Sri Nityananda-rama, know it for certain that such a person is indeed the most fortunate soul in the universe.

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